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Department of Justice
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Volunteer Shelter Bed Programs

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VOLUNTEER SHELTER BED PROGRAMS

Prepared For

U.S. Department of Justice

The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration

The Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention

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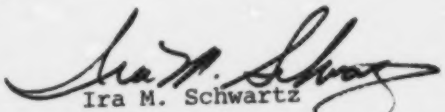
JULY, 1980

FOREWORD

A major intent of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act is to encourage development of community-based alternatives to the institutionalization of status offenders. This intent is founded upon the fact that institutionalization is unnecessary and often harmful to youth. Research and common sense dictate that troubled youth, particularly status offenders, require access to and support from their families, schools, peers and other elements of the community. When, for one reason or another, status offenders cannot stay at home, it is imperative that they be placed in the least restrictive setting in the community.

Few would disagree with the appropriateness of community based programs for status offenders. Resistance stems from the belief that effective alternatives are both costly and difficult to establish and maintain. The fact is that successful alternatives are not only cheaper than institutions, but also are simpler to develop. The volunteer shelter beds program for status offenders is one such alternative. Its implementation throughout the country on both the state and local level has shown the program to be a cost-effective and humanitarian alternative to institutions. Perhaps the program's greatest asset is that it draws on volunteers in the community to care for youth whose problems are more easily addressed within the environment from which they stem.

The volunteer shelter beds program development guidelines in this booklet are offered in the spirit that effective alternatives can be developed, and in the hope that we all will meet the urgent need to respond creatively to the problems of status offenders and their families.



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INTRODUCTION

National and local initiatives to deinstitutionalize status offenders (DSO) frequently encounter obstacles when a community only has secure facilities available for youths who must be sheltered away from home. Status offenders who need shelter for a short period of time may be placed in secure institutions if no other residential facility is available.

An alternative to placing these youths in adult jails, homes for delinquents, or other secure facilities is creating a volunteer shelter bed program and housing them temporarily in private homes. This is a community alternative that has been implemented successfully in Florida and is being duplicated throughout the country.

The volunteer shelter bed program provides a non-secure residential alternative for status offenders without having to create new facilities or convert existing institutions. Individuals in the community volunteer a place in their homes for a short period of time for a child who is awaiting a court hearing, permanent placement in a foster home, or return to his family. The program provides short-term custodial care while the agency responsible for the youth processes the case and makes arrangements for other services. Although the program does not necessitate new facilities, it does require a set of policies and procedures in order to be effective and successful. This booklet describes an approach to establishing such a program.

CREATING A SHELTER BED PROGRAM

The first step in creating a volunteer shelter bed program is for a community and responsible youth agencies to consider issues relating to status offenders and their need for residential services. The most critical decision is whether volunteer shelter beds are a sensible type of placement for these youth. Experience has shown that this alternative works well in small communities and rural areas where juvenile facilities are not cost effective. Community willingness to share in the responsibility for housing young people is also necessary. Once the idea is accepted as worth exploring, other issues must be addressed:

- What would be the program's goals in terms of number of beds to be provided and number of homes to be recruited? This question raises other issues, in particular, the number of youth needing non-secure placement and the number of homes that can be realistically expected to be recuited from the community. Exhibit A is one formula for determining the number of non-secure shelter beds needed in a community. Any existing shelter beds should be subtracted from the total to arrive at the number of beds needed.

- Which status offenders would participate in the program? What criteria would be used to decide which youth can be safely and appropriately placed in shelter homes? Not all status offenders might fit into a private home situation.

- What effect(s) would this program have on existng youth facilities or other DSO programs? A volunteer shelter bed program might strengthen efforts toward DSO by reducing the population of juvenile facilities with a low-cost alternative. Also, such a program might increase community support through residents' involvement in housing troubled youth.

- Who would operate the program and what authority and responsibilities would this person have? One person or agency would have to be designated as the lead to implement and operate the program.

- How much staff and funding is available for the program? What new resources would be needed? A volunteer program, by definition, is not costly and volunteer families are not normally reimbursed for their beds. However, there may be some expenses for clothing and toiletries for youth, reimbursement for recruitment costs, insurance, etc., that might have to be anticipated.

- What other programs, agencies, and departments should be notified or coordinated with? These agencies might include law enforcement, courts, volunteer agencies, or community groups.

- What are the current policies, procedures, and attitudes toward use of volunteer homes in a placement program? Are there any state or local licensing requirements for such homes? Have volunteer homes been used before in the community and with what results?

- How would volunteers be recruited, screened, oriented, and monitored? This question goes to the heart of a successful shelter bed program.

In summary, program goals and policies need to be established as the first task in setting up a volunteer shelter bed program. Those priorities must be based on a firm knowledge of the function and purpose of the program as well as an understanding of the dynamics of the community where the program will operate and the status offenders who it will serve. These issues are all explored in more depth in this booklet.

Formula for Estimating
Number of Non-Secure Beds Needed

EXHIBIT A

1.	"Slice-in-time" survey to determine the average number of status offenders needing shelter on a given night.	Representative nights March 1 = 7 status offenders June 1 = 4 September 1 =12 December 1 = 9 32 status offenders
2.	Average number of beds needed (divide by 4)	32 ÷ 4 = 8
3.	Multiply by 3 to allow for coverage when some families are busy, out of town, etc.	8 x 3 = 24
4.	Multiply the total by 40% which will account for turnover of foster parents.	24 .40 9.60 or 10
5.	Add step 3, the extra number of homes needed (24), to the number of homes in Step 4 (10) to allow for turnover.	24 + 10 = 34

THE VOLUNTEER FAMILY

Introduction

A volunteer shelter bed program requires, above all, finding suitable homes and willing families who will house children on short notice. If a program can identify responsible residents who are willing to commit to the program, then the greatest obstacle to success is overcome. The amount of effort required by program planners depends in large part on community awareness of and involvement in the problems of young people. If youth problems are not understood by sympathetic residents, then a volunteer shelter bed program may have to be preceded by a public education effort.[1] However, once a volunteer shelter bed program is considered to be a viable alternative, six tasks are required to start the program:[2]

- locating potential volunteer homes;
- screening and/or licensing volunteer homes;
- orienting volunteers to the program;
- matching youths with families; and
- assisting families who have agreed to take a child.

Locating Volunteer Homes

Locating families willing to take in a youth may be difficult and require recruiting from different segments of the community. Potential volunteers may know very little about the existence and purpose of a shelter bed program. To ensure that a sufficient number of homes are located, program planners need to tap every possible source of volunteers. This may necessitate a deliberate public relations or advertising strategy as a prelude to more intensive recruitment. Activities such as speaking before civic organizations, buying advertising space, taking advantage of public service announcements or arranging for feature stories in local newspapers all help to introduce the program to the community.

These steps, however, are just preliminary to locating actual families. A shelter bed program requires a unique kind of volunteerism. People are donating not only their time and effort but also a part of their personal lives. By allowing a stranger into their homes, their volunteerism becomes a major commitment. Recruiters must remember the depth of commitment they are asking of potential volunteer families and be responsive to their questions, uncertainties, and needs.

There are many reasons why a family would open its home to a child. Compassion and a genuine desire to help troubled youth are clearly major reasons for participating in a shelter bed program. The prospect of personal involvement

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[1] The booklet, Publicity Strategies, Arthur D. Little, Inc., prepared for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, June, 1978 may be helpful.

[2] The booklet, Foster Parenting, Arthur D. Little, Inc., prepared for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, offers more detailed information on recruiting, screening and training volunteer families.

also appeals to some people. While prospective volunteers should never be misled as to the extent of their role in the lives of the youths they take in, their importance to the program should be stressed and repeated. People like to be needed.

For a program such as this, the most effective recruitment strategy is face-to-face contact. This approach allows program recruiters to direct their appeal to people who have the potential and maturity to act as shelter parents. Called "goal-directed" recruiting, this approach attempts to reach people who may be excellent volunteers but who might not respond to a general appeal. Some communities have used the following approach for finding volunteers:

1. A recruiter locates five or more clergymen or other community leaders who are interested in youth and the volunteer shelter bed program.

2. The recruiter, after explaining the program, asks the contact people to suggest or recommend five individuals or families that may be willing and able to house a child. They are asked to consider people they know personally to have the maturity and dedication necessary to the program. It is through this referral process that the non-typical volunteer family can be identified.

3. The recruiter and contact person then visit the potential volunteer home and make their appeal in person. Experience has shown that it is much harder for a potential volunteer to dismiss a personal appeal than a public service announcement or a handbill.

This recruitment process is time consuming. The initial families proposed may not be interested in participating and further personal visits may be needed. However, this approach does pinpoint a preselected group of people who are most apt to support the purposes of the program even if they do not volunteer their homes. This strategy relies on community leaders who add authority and respect to a recruitment effort.

Another advantage to personal, goal-directed recruiting is that it gives potential volunteers a chance to ask questions and to decide whether or not they are interested in the program without the inconvenience of visiting the agency. More important, face-to-face recruiting gives the recruiter an opportunity to generate interest and a desire to participate. This is the real secret of finding volunteers.

Using volunteers as recruiters can increase the ability to make personal contact with many people in the community. Experienced, enthusiastic volunteers can be as effective in motivating groups or individuals as paid program staff. Certainly training and planning are required but the potential payoff is substantial. Volunteer recruiters can greatly expand the number of new volunteers introduced to the program. Twenty-five recruiters can cover more ground and talk to more people than one staff person. Caution, however, is needed here. While recruiting by groups

of volunteers offers great potential, it also creates problems in planning and control. Volunteer recruiters must be trained, and given information about the agency and its volunteer shelter bed needs. Also, recruiting assignments need to be coordinated so that contacts are not duplicated or missed entirely.

Within the general category of personal recruiting is a variety of techniques that can be used. A team approach of two or more recruiters may work well. Or, the program planning and coordination could be handled by the coordinator who, in turn, delegates most of the responsibility for personal contacts to groups of volunteers covering particular segments of the community.

Screening/Licensing Volunteers

The purpose of screening and licensing is to ensure that families who have volunteered their homes are suitable. Questions about motivation, attitudes toward children, and household arrangements are part of the screening process and help to eliminate volunteer applicants who will not provide youths with a supportive setting or who are potentially abusive.

Licensing is a legal function and requirements vary among states that have foster care licensing laws. Not all states do. It is a form of screening and also reduces the personal and institutional liabilities of the sponsoring agency and individual volunteers. Licensing may require that a volunteer family only fill out a formal application stating particulars about the home and the individuals involved, or it may ask volunteers to agree to an at-home interview so that licensing representatives may see the home and living conditions. The State of New Mexico requires, for example, agencies to complete a formal application for each volunteer home and to fill out a check list on the condition of the shelter home. Specifically, the list asks about the structure of the house, heating, water, plumbing and sanitation, electricity, kitchen and food, first aid supplies, and children's accommodations.

The most reliable screening device is the interview. While volunteer workers may conduct the interviews, a coordinator or supervisor should direct the screening and centralize the process so that volunteers are not missed.

The interview serves two purposes: it introduces the program to potential families and it enables the screener to evaluate the potential volunteer family. Issues to be explored in the interview are:

- Individual and family stability. The volunteer program should have a policy on single parent volunteers so that they are not unintentionally screened out.
- Degree of rigidity, prejudice, bigotry, moralizing, and judgmental attitudes toward others.
- Warmth and empathy for others.

- Reasonable self-confidence and ego health -- volunteers who have a constant need for love, recognition, reinforcement, and direction can be difficult to supervise.

- Commitment -- how willing is the volunteer to devote the necessary time and effort? Ask the volunteer, and remember that the youth's needs come first in the program.

- Restrictions on type of placement a family will accept. They may limit acceptable placements to one sex, a racial group, or a certain age. However, a family that imposes too many conditions on the kinds of youth it will take in may be expressing fundamental doubts about their participation in the program.

- Dependability -- foster parents must be counted on to supervise the children in their care.

- Availability -- how frequently and for what length of time is a family willing to have a child? Are they aware that placements may be made on a day's notice?

- Record of criminal conviction -- an arrest and conviction should not necessarily exclude a person from being a volunteer. The nature of the offense, the date of the last conviction and offense patterns are obviously determining factors in deciding whether a record will disqualify a potential volunteer.

- Reasons for wanting to be a volunteer.

The hardest part of a recruiter's job probably is rejecting a potential volunteer. At times, however, it must be done. The consequences of a bad placement can be tragic for a youth and for the entire program. Possible reasons for not accepting a volunteer are insufficient time spent at home to provide adequate supervision of a youth, lack of experience with children, inability to meet home licensing requirements, insufficient income or space in the home, poor health, or a felony conviction. However, program planners would do well to consider alternative types of volunteer activity for people who want to help but would be inappropriate as house parents.

Volunteer applicants should not be overburdened with paperwork in the screening process. An application form and personal references should be all that is required of an applicant. Written examinations, personality inventories, or psychological tests for volunteers are rarely, if ever, necessary and they can be expensive, demeaning, and frightening.

Form 1 on the following page, "Volunteer Bed Screening," and the explanation of questions is a sample screening device. It should be completed by agency staff during the interview with the volunteer.

VOLUNTEER BED SCREENING

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Number and Ages of Children

Reason for Volunteering

General Attitudes and Values

Health and Sanitation

Physical Setting of Home

Times Home is Available

Types of Children Home May Receive/Restrictions on Children Placed

References (Names of three people who will provide information about the suitability of the family and the home)

Circle one

1. Is income of family adequate?	Yes	No
2. General health of family appears to be good	Yes	No
3. One of the adults is employed or has adequate outside income	Yes	No
4. The volunteer has passed a police check	Yes	No

I approve/disapprove this home as a Volunteer Bed for the Division of Youth Services

_____
Volunteer Signature

EXPLANATION SHEET

Number and Ages of Children - List the number of children, the ages, and sex of all children in the family. This is necessary information in order to make proper placement.

Reason for Volunteering - Report the family's reason for application, expressed and implied, and how they became interested in the program. This discussion will help to focus on how the applicant became aware of the program and help to recruit other families by identifying the most effective recruitment approaches.

General Attitudes and Values - A general exploration of the family's attitudes toward the kinds of children and problems that the agency handles will give an idea about how the program will be represented to the community by the applicant and how the child or children placed with them will be treated. Discussion can be used to explain to the applicant what they may expect of the child's behavior when he is placed in their home, especially if it is the first detention of any kind.

Health and Sanitation - To ensure that the home is relatively safe and free from health hazards, the agency should request an inspection of the premises by the local health department if it provides this service. However, if the home looks as though it is free of health and fire hazards, there is no reason why the home cannot be used prior to receiving the health department's approval. If there is question about the fire safety of the home, the health department will probably inform you and will request a fire safety inspection as well.

Physical Setting - A brief description of the home, housekeeping standards, etc., will be useful to the intake or detention counselors in determining which kind of home would be best for what type of child. For example, if a child who needs emergency placement has a health problem, it would be helpful to know whether the shelter home is near a hospital or a doctor's office. This need not be any more detailed than to give the counselor some idea about the neighborhood's general character.

Times Home is Available - List the total number of days the home would be available for placement. You should also have information regarding how many times a month they would be willing to accept a child and if more than one child would be acceptable, e.g., a home would be available on weekends once a month for one child.

Types of Children Home May Receive - Under this listing should be any restrictions regarding the race, sex, creed or national origin that the volunteer home wants, e.g., will take black/white children only, etc.

Orientation

Each volunteer or volunteer family should receive at least three to four hours of orientation or introduction to the program. Orientation should include general information about the sponsoring agency, the shelter bed program, status offenders, and very specific facts about the kinds of youths who will be placed and expectations for the youths' and volunteers' conduct. Orientation administrators should assume that volunteers know very little about status offenders, youth agencies, and foster parent programs and thus provide as full an explanation of all the components of the program as is necessary.

The following subjects should be covered during the introductory remarks:

- rationale and need for volunteer homes;
- background information on the problems and needs of status offenders and on who will be placed in volunteer homes;
- overview of agency services and responsibilities;
- volunteer responsibilities regarding agency rules, legal restrictions and requirements, confidentiality, and recordkeeping; and
- agency responsibilities regarding placements, supervision, support, and monitoring.

A discussion of specific kinds of problems that might come up, and ways to handle them, should be included in orientation. Some questions which are likely to arise center around the following issues:

- School: The agency should tell the volunteer family of any plans to enroll a child in school when placements last more than a few days. School enrollment, however, is not practicable if a child is leaving an area in the near future. If a child is already attending school, this information should be shared with the shelter bed home and any transportation problems arising from the placement should be resolved between the agency and the volunteer. The problems of children who are truant or runaways should be addressed and the agency should inform volunteers about what to do if a child refuses to attend school.

- Visits from Natural Parents: Volunteers should know whether a child is allowed to visit, talk with, or have any contact with his parents. Any visits by natural parents to the volunteer's home should be arranged through the agency and be convenient for the volunteers. Volunteers and the agency should also explore the possibility of the volunteers meeting with natural parents about problems or concerns of the youth if the placement is to last more than a few days.

- Medical Emergencies: Volunteers should have the name and telephone number of a doctor and dentist they can call in case of medical emergency. They also should be informed as to the procedure for payment for medical services. Although the agency is responsible for the child's medical expenses, the volunteers may need details about insurance coverage if they are with a child in an emergency.

- Insurance: Volunteers should be covered by a liability insurance policy that applies either to all agency employees (volunteers may need to be reimbursed a nominal sum if employees must be paid to qualify) or a separate policy. The insurance should cover for accidents or uncontrollable events that happen when a youth is in a volunteer's home or under his supervision. Appendix A contains liability insurance guidelines from the State of Florida that may be helpful for an agency arranging for coverage of volunteers. The Florida policy suggests issues that should be considered by any program, such as the question of whether volunteers should be covered for use of automobiles when driving on agency business. In addition to liability insurance, volunteers should carry their own, private homeowners' insurance.

- Volunteer Home Agreement: Volunteers should be asked to read, discuss, and sign an agreement that very clearly states their responsibilities, the agency's responsibilities, and youth's role in the shelter bed home. Such an agreement reduces the chances of any misconceptions, confusions, or disagreements about the program's operation. The sample agreement on the following page (Form 2) is very detailed about the expectations of each party. Such issues as the number of children to be placed in a home at any one time, parental visits, and overnight trips by the volunteer family with or without the child are to be resolved before the agreement is signed.

- Trips Away From Home: Generally, there are few restrictions on a family taking an overnight trip with a child. However, volunteers planning such a trip should contact the agency to make sure the child is not required elsewhere at that time, or that there are no legal objections or objections by the natural family.

- Crisis Intervention: Volunteer families should be familiar with and instructed about what to do in cases of drug abuse, running away, or violent or delinquent behavior. Names, addresses, and phone numbers to contact in the event of such problems should be provided.

Matching Volunteers and Youths

The biggest concern that volunteers will have is probably about the kinds of children who might be placed in their homes. There usually is much

VOLUNTEER HOME AGREEMENT

In consideration of the placement of one or more children in their home, the undersigned agree to comply with the conditions relating to such placements.

We, the Applicants:

1. Agree to volunteer our home for the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program.

2. Understand that we will provide home facilities for children who are referred to the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program as children in need of supervision for _____ days for any one child.

3. Agree to care for up to _____ child/children at a time, and have adequate space and suitable accommodations to care for this number of youths.

4. Agree to provide proper supervision of any child or children placed in our home by the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program; agree to treat said child or children as though a member of our own family; and further agree to the regulations and restrictions placed upon said child or children by an authorized agent of the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program -- including placement changes, return to parents and relatives, and rules for the child during his/her stay; and will report any variations from said regulations and restrictions on the part of the child immediately to the proper agent of the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program.

5. Agree to cooperate regarding visits between the child and his/her family, as arranged by the coordinator or his/her designated representative.

6. Agree not to release a child in our care without authorization from the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program.

7. Agree to plan with the program regarding absence of both volunteer parents from the home for overnight or longer and plan with the program when a child is to be away from home overnight or longer.

8. Report promptly illnesses, behavior and adjustment problems of placement children, and consult with the program on their medical needs.

9. Agree not to make any attempt to indoctrinate the child with any political or religious beliefs.

10. Agree to treat information about placement children and their families in strictest confidence, to be shared only with the program.

11. Understand that we have the right to refuse to take a youth if such a request comes at an inconvenient time or if we feel that we cannot relate to said youth or if for any reason we find said child or children unacceptable to us.

12. Understand that we have the right to request removal from the home of any youth in the event that the arrangement proves unsatisfactory and that the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program shall do so as soon as practicable.

13. Understand that the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program through an authorized representative shall have the right to make reasonable visitations in our home to ensure that said home remains suitable for youths and that furthermore the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program has the authority to terminate the use of a home at any time that the program deems such action in the best interest of the youth.

14. Agree to comply with the licensing requirements of the state.

15. Agree to report promptly any family changes affecting eligibility, licensing, or use of the home, including changes of address or housing requirements, serious family illnesses, and changes in family members living in the household.

16. Understand that we have the right to withdraw from this program upon written request to the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program and acceptance of such request by said program.

We, the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program

1. Designate_____ as our agent for purposes of implementing this agreement, and hereinafter he is referred to as agent.

2. Will provide medical expenses and, if necessary, transportation of the child to the home.

3. Will provide for contact with the home at least once a day while the child is in the home.

4. Will be responsible for moving as quickly as possible to find a more permanent placement for the youth or to return him to his home as appropriate.

We have read and agree to the foregoing provisions prescribed by the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program as conditions for licensing, and understand that any license issued as a result of this agreement may be revoked upon breach of these conditions. We have retained a copy of this agreement.

_____ _____ _____

Husband's Signature Wife's Signature Date

_____

Volunteer Shelter Bed Program Coordinator

apprehension about youths who might alter the family routine, not get along with adults and other children in the home, or pose a threat to the family. These fears have to be faced. Program managers should be very candid about what a family should expect. They should also try to match youths and families so that incompatibilities and disruptions are minimized.

The agency should begin by asking volunteers to state their preferences as to the kinds of children they wish to shelter. Volunteers should specify any preferences regarding age, race, sex, length of stay, smoking habits, and other conditions of placement. However, volunteers should not be encouraged to be extremely picky about the youths they take in. Volunteers should be reminded that the youths are status offenders, that they are not violent or criminal, and that their "crimes" do not threaten the community or individuals. The "Volunteer Shelter Home" information sheet on the following page (Form 3) is an example of the kind of specifications volunteers can make about children to be placed in their homes.

When matching volunteers and youths, the agency should take into consideration more than the basic requirements as to age, sex, etc. Other factors in the matching process are lifestyle of the volunteer family (how structured or loose is the home and which is better for the child?), the number, ages, and sex of other children in the home, location of the home and its proximity to schools or agency services working with the child, and any religious preferences of either volunteer or child.

These considerations assume that the agency has a choice as to homes for placing a child. However, in a small community or rural area, such a choice may not exist. A shelter bed program with a limited number of volunteers may have to rely on the subjective judgment of a program supervisor to determine who will be compatible and to make the best placements.

The matching process should also include sharing with volunteers all relevant information about a child. They will need to know about the child's background, his parents and family situation, and the circumstances that led to the placement. The more volunteers know about a youth placed in their homes, the more comfortable and secure they will feel. Nebulous fears about an uncontrollable, unpredictable juvenile should be dispelled with facts about his life and background.

Assisting the Family

The potential success of a volunteer shelter bed program is improved when the sponsoring agency provides assistance to families housing youth. Some agencies are able to reimburse volunteers a daily rate for each child they place. (Paying volunteers may change the nature and tone of a program). Even if no money is available, other kinds of assistance can be provided. For example, youth often need clothing -- shoes, pajamas, jackets -- and programs should consider establishing a permanent "clothes closet" for use by families. Toiletries are another necessity for some youth. The Florida program has solved this problem by arranging for a drug store chain

FORM 3

VOLUNTEER SHELTER HOME
INFORMATION

Coordinator: _____

Host Parents: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone: _____

Single _____ Married _____ Divorced _____

Widowed _____

Ages of own children in host home, if any:

_____

Approximate Age Bracket of Host:

Below 30 _____ 30-45 _____ and Above _____

Places, hours, and phone numbers of employment:

_____

_____

Restrictions (e.g. non-smoker, girls only)

_____

_____

Child Preferences

_____ Male

_____ Female

_____ Either

_____

_____ Any Child

_____ Delinquent

_____ Dependent

_____ CINS

_____

_____ Any age

_____ 12 and Below

_____ Above 12

_____

_____ Black

_____ White

_____ Either

Length of time this volunteer is willing to keep a child.

_____ 48 hours _____ Few Days _____ Few Weeks _____ More than a month

Number of children this volunteer will accept at one time : _____

_____

Description of host home and family, and any special considerations when placing a child.

_____

_____

to donate new toothbrushes, soap, combs, etc. for shelter homes. New Mexico volunteer families receive toiletries from a cosmetic manufacturer for both boys and girls.

Transportation may be a problem for volunteer families, particularly getting a child to and from school, the agency, or court appearances. Shelter bed program staff should be aware that volunteers may not have cars and should make arrangements with the volunteer family for transportation.

Families also may need help with further training or information on the problems of status offenders and how placed youth can best fit into their homes. Subjects they may want to know more about include alcoholism, drug abuse, child abuse, sexual promiscuity, court proceedings, and juvenile law. The agency should be able to provide information in these areas.

ADMINISTRATION

Program Sponsorship

A volunteer shelter bed program may be initiated and administered by either a public or private organization at either the state or local level. The goals, organizational structure, policies, and procedures guiding a program all will depend on who is sponsoring the effort.

State-level program administration, as in Florida and New Mexico, can originate out of a strong commitment by state legislators to provide all communities throughout the state with a non-secure shelter, thus furthering deinstitutionalization of status offender efforts. The State Division of Youth Services, which may already be operating a foster home program, may also decide to implement a volunteer shelter bed program. A program sponsored by a state agency has inherent strengths: official and public receptiveness and acceptance may be more likely with a program operating under official state auspices. Also, financial and personnel resources may be more accessible. On the other hand, state sponsorship may face some difficulties. The volunteer shelter bed program relies on the commitment and involvement of many local residents. A state organization may be too far removed from communities' needs and leaders to set up a program effectively. Also, a state-level program, of necessity, must standardize policies and procedures. Such uniformity may be problematic given differences among communities.

A program that springs from local initiatives and is operated by a city, county, or private organization confronts different challenges. These programs often arise in response to a specific situation or problem; for example, the closing of a juvenile facility that leaves a specific number of status offenders without places to spend the night. Thus, the compelling need provides an important impetus to garnering the support needed to implement a program. A locally generated program has other assets. It can be specifically designed to reflect local needs and constraints. Also, such a program can be altered as circumstances change. A local program may face problems due to its sponsorship. The program may lack credibility without a state sanction. The program may want for funds or other resources. Also, local programs often face the problem of "reinventing the wheel" if they do not have access to similar efforts elsewhere. Still, though a local program might not have the resources of a state-sponsored effort, it may be more familiar with and more adept at operating within a community.

A shelter bed program, like other volunteer efforts, does not need extensive funding because the facilities and key participants--individuals or families --donate their homes and services. But the program cannot operate without any money. Some funding is usually required for operating overhead, recruitment, and the myriad tasks and paperwork needed to keep the program running.

Although the Florida program costs less than one-sixth the cost of putting status offenders in detention centers, it still required $36,000 seed money

for administration. So the question of sources of funding, even though they may be small, has to be answered. Existing shelter bed programs have been funded with money from the Federal Comprehensive Education and Training Act, state commissions, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and state youth services budgets.

Local shelter bed programs operating independently from an established youth division or agency may have to find and secure all funding before beginning. Similarly, staff to direct the program may have to be hired or assigned from other programs. A foster home program in Montana was established by a court probation office to respond to a rural community's youth referrals. The small community is far from an urban area and did not have a developed youth care program, such as a group home, so a probation officer was given the responsibility to create a program for its "youths-in-need-of-supervision."

A program in Georgia, in contrast, is operated by a private organization with support from a local youth advocacy group. It was able to provide the staffing and resources to run a shelter bed program but sought administrative expertise and funding from outside sources.

Staffing

The level and amount of staffing necessary for a shelter bed program depends very much on its size and geographical scope, as well as on the agency running it. There are three principal functions that may be handled by different individuals or may be combined.

The program needs an administrator to form policies and procedures, handle community relations, act as a liaison with other youth programs or organizations, and secure funding. A second function is recruitment, which entails identifying families who are willing to house youths. Day-to-day operations, including youth intake, matching youths with homes, making actual placements, monitoring homes, and general recordkeeping also may require a full-time staff person. A program in Montana is administered and run by one person. A shelter bed program in Georgia has two principal staff members -- director and recruiter -- and uses part-time people for further recruitment and recordkeeping. Staff may be supplemented by volunteers who can be trained to help with any program task.

The training of staff may be extensive, especially with a statewide program, or it may consist of just disseminating information to program staff. The need for training must be assessed in light of existing staff familiarity with status offenders, youth programs, the community and its needs, and general foster care. Small, local programs may decide to conduct in-house training either separate from other in-service training or as part of the usual orientation/training routine. In large programs, training may be incorporated into statewide training for foster parent programs or other deinstitutionalization of status offender strategies.

The issues that need to be covered through staff training or information dissemination are:

- Rationale for and organization of the shelter bed program; need and appropriateness for the community and agency; nature and needs of status offenders; costs; use of volunteers.

- Agency policy regarding volunteers: responsibilities and commitment; role with placed youth; role vis-a-vis staff; motivation and needs; agency support during placements.

- Agency operation of the program: recruitment, orientation, screening, monitoring, volunteer supervision; recordkeeping; youth intake and placement; and follow-up.

Youth Intake and Placement

The volunteer shelter bed program should have guidelines relating to what kinds of children are appropriate. Chronic runaways, for instance, may not adapt to a shelter bed program. Their transience may strain volunteer families' willingness to continue participation in the program. Such children may need more supervision than a volunteer family can be expected to provide. Similarly, disturbed, acting-out youths may not be appropriate for a shelter bed program.

Guidelines regarding the kinds of youths who will be placed in volunteer homes are essential. Just as an abusive volunteer family can irreparably damage the program, so can a misplaced youth hurt the program's reputation and ability to recruit new volunteers. Referring agencies need to be aware of these guidelines so that not all status offenders are routinely directed to the program.

After assessing the kinds of youths it will accept, the program organizers need to evaluate the volunteer homes in terms of appropriateness for particular kinds of children. Matching entails scrutinizing not only volunteer homes (see section on Matching) but also the individual youths. Attitudes, behavior patterns, even personal habits must be taken into account in determining where a youth is placed. Specific factors in a youth's background should be considered. These include the following:

- Does he have brothers/sisters and how will he fit into a home with other children?

- How does he feel about placement in a volunteer home versus a juvenile facility? Children may feel strained and uncomfortable in a private home and may prefer a facility.

- What is his attitude toward discipline? How will he react to the authority of a strange adult?

- How independent is the youth? Does he prefer a lot of privacy and time alone?

- Does the youth have any health conditions that need special care or attention? (e.g., diabetes, bedwetting, allergies)

- What is the child's social and economic background and in what kind of surroundings would he feel most comfortable?

A "Youth Intake Form" (Form 4) on the following page illustrates the kinds of characteristics about a child that an agency might use to decide where he should be placed.

FORM 4

YOUTH INTAKE FORM

ALL INFORMATION IS CONFIDENTIAL.

Home Location & Parents/Guardian to Contact

1. Child's Name
2. Present Address
3. Present Phone
4. Contact Person (if not parents)
5. Parents' Address
6. Parents' Phone
7. Mother's Name
8. Father's Name

Personal Data on Child

9. Living arrangement
   -- Own parents _____
   -- Mother & Stepfather _____
   -- Father & Stepmother _____
   -- Mother alone _____
   -- Father alone _____
   -- Other relatives _____
   -- In substitute care _____
   -- Institution _____
   -- Elsewhere _____

10. Birthdate

11. Sex
   -- Male
   -- Female

12. Nationality
   -- Anglo
   -- American Indian/Native American
   -- Black
   -- Chicano/Spanish American
   -- Other _____
   -- Unknown _____

13. Individual #
   -- First-born child
   -- Second-born child
   -- Third-born child
   -- Fourth-born child
   -- Other _____

14. Employment/Education status of child:
   -- Full-time student
   -- Part-time student
   -- Dropped out of school -- not employed
   -- Dropped out of school -- employed part-time
   -- Dropped out of school -- employed full-time
   -- Part-time employed -- part-time student

15. Education (highest level completed):
   -- Through 08. -- Grammar school
   -- Through 12. -- High school
   -- Through 16. -- College

16. Number of siblings (include any other dependents besides parents)
   -- One
   -- Two
   -- Three
   -- Four
   -- etc.

17. Father's job status

-- Unemployed, available & able to work
-- Unemployed, unavailable & unable to work
-- Employed full-time; occupation _____
-- Employed part-time; works less than normal work week; occupation _____
-- Seasonal worker -- works less than 7 months a year
-- Never employed --no work experience
-- Retired -- previously employed but no expectations of returning to work
-- Not used -- i.e., no father
-- Unknown

18. Mother's job status
(Same categories as Question 17)

Health Information

19. Noticeable disabilities:
-- None
-- Yes -- physical_____
-- Yes -- mental _____

20. Chronic Illness:
-- None
-- Diabetes
-- Epilepsy
-- Heart disease
-- Asthma
-- Other allergy _____
-- High blood pressure
-- Other _____

21. Regularly administered medication:

_____

Legal Circumstances & Placement

22. Type of Offense
-- Runaway
-- Ungovernable
-- Truancy
-- Curfew violation
-- Other _____

23. Referral Source:
-- School referral
-- Police referral
-- Court referral after adjudication
-- Juvenile Probation referral
-- Social Services Agency referral
-- Family (parent or guardian) referral
-- Other _____

24. Referral date
25. Referral time
26. Date placed
27. Time placed
28. Host Family _____

29. Child held before placement?
-- No
-- Yes -- police station
-- Yes -- detention home
-- Yes -- jail
-- Yes -- Other _____

30. If child held, why?

_____

31. Date released from host home.

32. Disposition
-- Returned to own home before court hearing
-- Returned to own home after court hearing
-- Placed in foster home
-- Placed in diagnostic unit
-- Placed in group home
-- Other _____

33. Any emergency expenses or extraordinary circumstances during child's detention?
-- No
-- Yes -- theft: Article: _____ $ _____
-- Yes -- medical/dental expenses: Description: _____ $ _____
-- Yes -- runaway _____
-- Yes -- trip or overnight away from home _____
-- Yes -- other _____

34. General Health

-- How are you feeling lately? OK _____ Not OK _____
-- Most recent illness: When _____ What _____
-- Last physical exam: When _____
-- Currently under doctor's care? Name of Doctor _____
Address _____ Treated for _____

35. Attitudes toward school and education in general:

36. Comments (general attitude toward authority, cooperative?, general emotional state, etc.):

37. Child's religion: _____ Family with different religion ___OK ___ Not OK

38. Language: English _____ Spanish _____ Indian _____ Other _____

39. Smoke? Yes _____ No _____

40. Comments (need for privacy, specific characteristics of host family(ies) available):

_____

_____

_____

I understand that all the above information is confidential and will be used for placement and statistical purposes only. All statistical studies will be conducted so as not to divulge the identity of any of the youths participating in the Volunteer Shelter Bed Program.

_____ _____
Signature of Youth Date

MONITORING PLACEMENTS

An agency needs to keep daily contact with both volunteer families and placed youths. An effective and smooth running program depends on successful placements in which families feel the child has fit into the home with the least amount of disruption and inconvenience, and in which youths have been safely and adequately cared for. When a child is in a home, the agency should telephone the volunteer family daily to answer any questions it may have about the child and to ensure that the placement is working out satisfactorily. The agency may also want to talk to the child to make sure he is satisfied with the placement.

Following a stay, both the volunteer family and the youth should be interviewed about the placement. Some states ask families and youths to complete an "Observation Report." These reports require sensitive and subjective responses, and the administering agency should decide whether a personal interview or standard questionnaire should be used to gather the information.

The Home Observation Report of the volunteer family about the placed youth should cover the following attitudes and behaviors:

- Relationships and behavior with other children, parents, and visitors;
- Attitudes toward authority, work, discipline, personal property, personal appearance, and the placement home;
- Attitudes toward and participation in activities around the home and community;
- Emotional adjustment and maturity; and
- Personal traits: truthfulness, honesty, etc.

The Youth Observation Report on the placement home will help the agency match youths and families, and ensure that the youth was treated properly. The following questions should be included in the report:

- How was the home physically?
- How were the meals?
- How was your room?
- How did the family treat you? Comment about privacy, household chores, and anything about the family you did not like.
- How did the placement work, in general?

Another aspect of monitoring is tracking the youth agency system and its handling of the youth's case. A child should not become lost in a shelter bed program and left indefinitely with a volunteer family. Stays are for a maximum of two weeks and the youth agency should make arrangements for the

child when he leaves the volunteer shelter. Placement in a shelter bed home should be regarded as a temporary placement and steps for obtaining hearings or arranging for a permanent placement should be carried out as expeditiously as possible.

Monitoring the shelter bed program may also entail contacting volunteer homes at times other than when a child is placed to let volunteers know that they are still considered on the active list of potential homes. Another purpose is for general feedback on the program. The Florida shelter bed program administrators conduct a telephone survey of volunteers to evaluate how the program is operating and how volunteers are being used. Approximately 15 questions are asked, ranging from "How did you find out about our needs?" to "Has a child been placed in your home and how long did he/she stay?"

Keeping Records

During recruitment and screening, youth intake, and individual placements, the agency should be maintaining records on all volunteers and youths in the shelter bed program. Keeping track of everyone means that volunteers are not ignored, forgotten, or lost from the program and that youths' cases, hearings, or permanent placements are arranged as quickly as if they were in a juvenile facility.

Useful tracking forms include:

- Master List of Homes: Name, address, telephone number and information regarding the type of child preferred.
- Active Home Log: Name, address, telephone number of a home in use; date the child has been placed, the child's name, and the date child left the volunteer home.
- Daily Youth Placement Log: Child's name, name of family where placed, date placed, and agency worker assigned to the youth; date child left volunteer home.
- Daily Home Contact Log: Volunteer name, telephone number, date telephone call is made, family remarks.

Program records should be maintained regularly, be accessible to workers assigned to individual youths and be duplicated for referring agencies or other offices working with a youth.

Forms other than those used for tracking -- volunteer and youth observation and evaluations, youth intake information, family screening/licensing information -- should be kept separate and confidential. Files on individuals -- volunteers and youth -- should be maintained separate from the daily log files and active lists.

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